In spite of all the many forms of diversion, however, for a large proportion of the masses life has been fairly circumscribed and monotonous. Particularly has this been true of the women and girls, to whom many of the amusements open to men are not available. For the farmers an interval occurs between the harvest and the spring planting—a hiatus which is longest in the North—when there is a good deal of enforced idleness. The monotony is augmented for the artisan, merchant, common laborer, and many others by the steadiness of toil. Some know of no release from work, not even (as in the case of food shops) on New Year's Day. Many have off only four or five days a year. The hours of labor are usually long, and while the pace is slow, little leisure exists for genuine rest or recreation. For instance, hand looms can often be heard going at almost any hour of the day or night.

To the Westerner of the modern rushing age much of the life of the farm and village and even of the towns seems peculiarly drab and lacking in variety. It must be remembered, however, that such an observer would probably have made the same comment on rural life in Europe in the eighteenth and even in much of the nineteenth century. Moreover, foreigner after foreigner has commented on the cheerfulness of the Chinese masses, and on their ability to find joy in little things, to laugh in the face of hardship, and to be patient under crushing natural disasters.

CHANGES WROUGHT BY THE COMING OF THE WEST

The West with which China has come into collision in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differs radically in

social organization, ideals, and customs from the Middle Kingdom. Since the Occident has been the aggressor, it is China which has been most affected. The West, as we have suggested, has not been appreciably modified—not even so much as by the contacts of the eighteenth century. The change in China has been all the more violent because the West with which the Orient has collided in the past two generations is itself in rapid transition, with institutions and customs in which every decade sees striking and bewildering alterations.

The contrasts between the two cultures in the phases of life dealt with in this chapter have been especially great and the results of the collision correspondingly disruptive. The Chinese